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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
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Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Lonny Pursell

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A-ONE #0816   04/21/06

~ Opera Releases Opera 9 ~ People Are Talking!   ~ Web's Role In Life!

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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""

Life is good! Only five more days, and I'll be officially semi-retired!
I'm so looking forward to getting away from the "rat race" for awhile. I'm
already planning some golf - maybe joining a summer league, numerous home
projects that seem to keep getting put off due to lack of time, getting the
yard (lawn and gardens) in shape, and much more. The yard work started last
weekend, getting rid of my neighbor's leaves that somehow manage to blow
into our yard year after year. I cut down numerous shrubs that have been
growing wildly in the back. We have some pros coming soon to take down some
trees; and then I can get a sprinkler system put in and then re-landscape
the lawn by the side of the house. Getting the gardens planned is always
fun - something I seem to have rekindled since being out of the city. And
I haven't forgot about the work inside the house either. The front porch
needs re-doing, some rugs taken up and the floor refinished, some painting,
and numerous other small stuff. Can't wait! Life, it's good.

Until next time...

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                   AtarICQ 0.168 Is Released

Hi all,

Following the recent progress in XaAES, aICQ is now available in a new
release where some things have been adjusted to work and look smoother
together with XaAES. For example, aICQ is now rendered okay also when the
AES draws textures as background on 3d-objects. In addition to this, the
tabs has been equipped with a discrete 3d-look that should kick in if you
run AtarICQ in >=256 colour mode.

Users with scrollwheel mice might be interested in knowing that aICQ now
responds to WM_ARROWED, and also supports XaAES WHL_AROWWHEEL mode causing
in which the AES sends extended WM_ARROWED messages to further optimise the
scrolling.

In addition to the above, a couple of bugs has also been found and fixed.

(For more details, see below)

To skip the details, and go to download site: http://www.ataricq.org

----- New in AtarICQ 0.168 ---

* aICQ's message window is now tweaked to look at its best when the
  dialog background is using a bitmap texture. As a result of this,
  the feature to configure the background fill colour from within the
  preferences has been removed. If you wish to tweak the background
  colour to a solid fill colour, you should however be able to do so
  using your favorite RSC-editor.

* Small adjustment made to popups, fixing appearance under latest XaAES.

* Scrolling behaviour changed slightly: When the slider is not located
  at its bottom position, the text will not scroll to bottom when new
  messages are coming in. If located at bottom => follow bottom.

* In addition to the above, aICQ will now need the slider to be
  located at its bottom position in order to consider messages
  to be read.

* The TABs in the message window are now equipped with a discrete
  3D-look when your setup can use >=256 colours. The active tab will
  also be enlarged slightly to further allow you to distinguish it
  from the unselected ones.

* AtarICQ will now redirect WM_ARROWED messages to the vertical
  sliders in both contact list and message window. When a mouse
  scrollwheel is rotated XaAES sends WM_ARROWED messages even to
  windows that don't have a native slider. This means that at least
  under XaAES you can now use your scrollwheel to scroll inside aICQ
  windows. AtarICQ also supports XaAES extended scrollwheel messages,
  using the WHL_AROWWHEEL mode.

* A bug that would cause display problems in the text input field in
  the message window has been fixed. It would only hit if the user had
  installed a custom system font, which had different char width/height
  than the original Atari font. Should be fixed now.

* Discovered a nasty bug that would cause very bad memory corruption
  upon certain incoming messages. The reason was that certain clients
  are using a single ascii-13 to indicate a rowbreak.
  Should be fixed now.

Regards,

/Joakim

http://www.ataricq.org
http://xaaes.atariforge.net
http://topp.atari-users.net

                    XaAES Alpha Update Available

Hi all,

Since a couple of somewhat serious issues in latest alpha release has been found, there is now an alpha update available for you to download. It also has a couple of new additions. These are the most important changes:

* Fixed bug causing COPS's CPX windows to disappear right after opening.

* New AES keyboard combo, CTRL+ALT+P, will restore palette to system default in colour modes 256 or less.

* New AES keyboard combo, CTRL+ALT+D, make a snapshot (needs external app, see readme.txt)

* Fixed a glitch where using CLOSER widget to close Taskmanager window released all information it contained.

* Taskmanager showed selected entries as black text on black background - fixed.

+even more fixes. See docs for details.

http://xaaes.atariforge.net

Regards,

/Joakim

http://www.ataricq.org
http://xaaes.atariforge.net
http://topp.atari-users.net

                    AtarIRC v2.05 Released

What's new in this release:

- Popup handler completely replaced, so that XaAes can properly texture them.

- Also keyboard navigation now works in popups under XaAes.

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FreeMiNT   http://sparemint.atariforge.net/sparemint/ [Free your mind...]
Atari Team http://setiathome.berkeley.edu/team_display.php?teamid=30472
L. Pursell http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/ [AtarIRC, GFA-Basic, Hades060]

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                    PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                  compiled by Joe Mirando

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. We're going to give this a shot, but I'll tell you right off that there aren't a heck of a lot of messages on the UseNet this week. I'm afraid that we may be looking at the beginning of the end for this column. If there aren't any messages, there isn't any column. I've got to tell you... it's a little more than a little depressing. I've been writing this column for a long time, and it's become a part of me. I enjoy doing it, and I learn something almost every week. How many hobbies can you say THAT about?

Well, anyway, we'll give it a shot this week and see what happens. If there aren't enough messages, I'll carry them over 'till next week. Of course, if that's the case, you won't be reading this, and you'll probably never know what I've just said because I'll re-write this portion of the column. Like I said, we'll give it a shot.

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==================================

Last week, Edward Baiz asked this about 'ghost' files:

"Is there a good program that will display ghost files so I can delete them?"

Someone else (I apologize, but I forgot who) asked Edward:

"What kind of files do you regard as "ghost" files?

- hidden or system files?
        -> most desktops can be configured to show them

- damaged directory entries?

- "files" allocating space (in the FAT) but having no directory entries?
        -> here I'd propose tools like Diskus or simple disc monitors."

Edward replies:

"Basically all of the above. I can get the BoxKite file selector to display, but I cannot delete them."

Ekkehard Flessa tells Edward:

"If you have Diskus (or perhaps SED), you can enter the directory and rename or delete the files by directly editing the directory entries.

But caution, it's quite easy to do great damage to your data if you don't know exactly what you are doing!"

Alexander Beuscher adds:

"But before you do so you should check whether the directory entries are related to a (trace of) allocated data clusters.

Or even better: Let your tool check the integrity of the file system...

Right, if you don't utilise advanced functionality of your tool then it's almost essential to have the background. Any sector monitor software that I have used so far gives appropriate warnings at least..."

Joakim Högberg posts this about XaAES:

"Since a couple of somewhat serious issues in latest alpha release has been found, there is now an alpha update available for you to download. It also has a couple of new additions. These are the most important changes:

* Fixed bug causing COPS's CPX windows to disappear right after opening.

* New AES keyboard combo, CTRL+ALT+P, will restore palette to system default in colour modes 256 or less.

* New AES keyboard combo, CTRL+ALT+D, make a snapshot (needs external app, see readme.txt)

* Fixed a glitch where using CLOSER widget to close Taskmanager window released all information it contained.

* Taskmanager showed selected entries as black text on black background
- fixed.

+even more fixes. See docs for details.

http://xaaes.atariforge.net "

Ronald Hall asks about BBS Express:

"Back in 1999, when Rich Sanchez closed official support for BBS Express!ST, he released a final version into the public domain. I don't have a copy of this release but would love to...

I've been trolling the Atari FTP sites (Belgian, Umich, etc) for the last month and have been unable to find it. I've been looking in Networking, Modem, BBS, etc,... I've also downloaded the index files from these sites and searched them. No luck.

Does anyone know where a copy of this release can be found? Any/all
help appreciated."

'ProToS' tells Ronald:

"you could find it here (BBS Express! ST version 1.98a)
< http://www.atari-forum.com/viewtopic.php?t=8611 > "

Ronald finds it, takes a look and asks:

"Okay, I just extracted it and glanced through it quickly.

So...the source code is -not- included? I had hoped it would be
there, so some minor updates could be done. That date error is the
worst thing, right off hand. Accepting (built-in) speeds higher
than 19.2k would be nice as well. Guess I'll keep on dreaming."

Lonny Pursell tells Ronald:

"You can force old apps to use those newer rates if you use those
serial patches. The really popular one, the name escapes me at
this moment.

It remaps the older lower rates nobody uses anymore to the upper
ones these apps can't normally set, example: 150, 300, 600, etc are
mapped to the rates above 19.2k.   I use to do this on my TT before
the inet came along and ethernet."

Ronald tells Lonny:

"I think you're referring to HSMODEM and on the hardware side, the
RSVE serial port upgrade.

Those are very good from what I've seen, but I'd just like to have
Express do it itself, ya know?

Can't have everything though, I guess."

Lonny replies:

"That's the one. But you do not need to add hardware unless the
machine don't have these rates. At least on the TT, just
installing the patches in the auto folder let me trick old software
into doing the 115k rate."

Ronald tells Lonny:

"Would that work with a Mega STe and its enhanced ports? I don't
have a TT but I've got a very nice Mega STe.

BTW, did you see that last TT that went on Ebay? It had accessories,
but man...$650!"

Well folks, I'm going to type this final paragraph in and then check
out the file size to see if it's worth including in this week's
issue. Cross your fingers, here we go... YES! JUST over the line,
but over the line nonetheless.

Well, tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready
to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Destroy All Humans! 2
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Tomb Raider: Legend!
                                    Sony Cuts PS2 Price!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                        Sony Drops PS2 Price

Sony Corp. on Thursday said it cut the U.S. price of its popular
PlayStation 2 video game console by about 13 percent, saying the discount
should help fuel demand.

In a statement, the company said that effective immediately the
PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system would retail for about $130,
down from a previous price of around $149.

Analysts have been waiting for a price reduction on Sony's market-leading
video game console ahead of the expected release of its new PlayStation 3
in November. Sony has kept mum on the price of its new system, due in
stores in November.

Rival Nintendo Co. Ltd is also slated to release its next-generation
machine, code-named Revolution, this year.

Video game console makers typically reduce prices to spur demand,
particularly as a device ages or ahead of the launch of a new model.

PlayStation 2, first introduced in 2000, has shipped over 101 million units
and dominates the interactive game console market, despite the introduction
last year of Microsoft Corp.'s next generation device, Xbox 360. The more
popular premium Xbox 360 system retails for $400.

Sony last cut the price on its stand-alone PS2 to about $149 from $179 in June 2004. Last week, Lazard Capital Markets analyst Colin Sebastian suggested that Microsoft could also trim the price on its original Xbox device, but said the impact of that would be limited due to dwindling supplies of the machine that now sells for around $149.

Console price cuts could also recharge slumping U.S. video game sales, which fell 8 percent in March, its seventh straight monthly decline, according to data from market research firm NPD Group. March hardware sales tumbled 31 percent on weak sales of current-generation consoles.

Destroy All Humans! 2 Announced For Xbox and Playstation 2

The world was left in shock and awe today, when THQ Inc. announced that another alien invasion is in the planning stages for deployment later this year. Known as Destroy All Humans! 2, newly leaked information from a highly classified source reveals the extraterrestrials known as Furons plan to infiltrate and probe citizens throughout the world. THQ has once again enlisted the expertise of Pandemic Studios to aid in thwarting this new invasion, joining together in preparation for an expected attack on the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Xbox video game and entertainment system from Microsoft this fall.

"Destroy All Humans! illustrates THQ's commitment to developing innovative and original games, and it accomplished impressive sales success by achieving Greatest Hits and Platinum Hits status less than a year after launch," said Kelly Flock, executive vice president, Worldwide Publishing, THQ. "Destroy All Humans! 2 builds upon everything people loved about the first game, adds tons of new features and gives fans of the original and newcomers something to get excited about later this year."

Sequel to the widely acclaimed hit, Destroy All Humans! 2 takes the irreverent Sci-Fi action gaming experience into the swinging sixties with all new game features, expanded open-world gameplay and co-op multiplayer. Assuming the role of the Furon Scout - Crypto 137 - players will embark on another mission to earth to take on the world of free love, the Cold War and other 60's era icons. In Destroy All Humans! 2 Players will have access to an upgraded arsenal of weapons and enhanced mental abilities while they battle a variety of new enemies from secret agents and giant creatures to Soviet Forces and ninja warriors.

"We are pulling out all the stops for the sequel, adding multiplayer co-op, five new open-worlds to explore and the same irreverent humor that was a hallmark of the first Destroy All Humans! game," said Pandemic President Josh Resnick. "With the new 60s era setting, we have plenty of new material to work with - from Hippies and British spy movies to Japanese monster flicks."

'Legend' Is Enjoyable to Play

Scantily clad archaeologist Lara Croft is back for more danger and hidden treasure in "Tomb Raider: Legend." This T-rated game ($49.99 for PlayStation 2 and Xbox, $59.99 for Xbox 360, $39.99 for personal computers) revives a long-suffering franchise.

The decline began with two dismal movies starring Angelina Jolie: "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" in 2001 and "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life" in 2003. Also in 2003 came "Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness," with its tedious controls and glitchy graphics.

It seemed as if Croft's glory days from a decade ago were over. But with "Legend," Eidos Interactive has liberated this brainy super heroine by letting Croft do what she does best: raid tombs for treasure, solving puzzles along the way.

This rebuilt Croft still wears her skimpy outfit consisting of combat boots, shorts and a tank top. Her revealing physique remains, too, though she's more athletic and not as outrageously proportioned as before.

This fitter, happier, more productive Croft translates into a game that's much more enjoyable to play than previous games in the series.

The controls are more crisp and precise than they've ever been: Croft jumps, slides and dangles off cliffs and swinging vines like a circus acrobat. (Though swimming is still a bit clunky.)

As the name implies, "Legend" explores some of Croft's roots, beginning with a plane crash with her mother in the Himalayas when she was just 9. Then there's some odd story involving sword fragments, but really this isn't a game you'll buy for a deep plot.

Croft's known for dual-wielding pistols, and packing heat certainly has its uses in the booby-trapped environments she'll explore in Bolivia, the Himalayas, Japan and other spots around the globe.

One of her niftiest new gadgets is a magnetic grappling tool. You can use it to shoot a cable in the distance to grab enemies, pull open stone doorways and to swing Tarzan-style across otherwise impassable chasms.

"Legend" uses real-world physics and many objects can be used strategically: piles of rocks can be pushed down a hillside to crush foes, for example.

There's little difference between the various versions in terms of gameplay. The Xbox 360 edition certainly has the best 3D graphics, and it should considering the $10 price premium.

If there are any faults to be found, it's the ease with which I breezed through the game.

Two days of casual play and I was done. But it's a good sign that I was left wanting more.

A franchise that was risking irrelevancy has made a strong return with "Legend."

Three stars out of four.

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Oracle CEO Says May Launch Own Linux Version

Oracle Corp. is considering launching its own Linux operating system and
has looked at buying one of the main suppliers of open-source technology,
Chief Executive Larry Ellison told a newspaper on Monday.

Such a move by the world's top supplier of database management software
into open source operating systems and applications would propel Oracle
into sectors of the software industry where it has never directly competed.

It would also step up competition with rivals ranging from Microsoft Corp.
to IBM to Red Hat and dozens of up and coming open-source start-ups,
analysts said.

Ellison told the Financial Times Oracle wanted to sell a full range of
software that included both the operating system and applications, or what
is known in the industry as a complete "software stack."

"I'd like to have a complete stack," Ellison said in the interview. "We're
missing an operating system. You could argue that it makes a lot of sense
for us to look at distributing and supporting Linux."

Brendan Barnacle, an analyst at Pacific Crest Equities, said he doubted
Oracle would launch its own version of Linux because competitors such as
SAP AG would not want to rely on a major rival for open-source needs.

"It would be pretty challenging to come up with a new version of Linux,"
Barnacle said. "They have the resources, but this is partly a shot across
the bow against Red Hat and others."

Open-source is growing in popularity because it allows customers to use
applications for free and only pay for custom features, maintenance and
support, cutting the cost of traditional software.

Oracle, which has long used open source to build some of its own software
products, has in recent months sought to become more of a broker among
various camps within the open- source movement, through acquisitions and
partnerships.

Among publicly traded companies, Red Hat Inc. is the leading open source
company, followed by Novell Inc. Scores of companies from Oracle and IBM to
privately held players, such as MySQL and Zend, also play in the market.

Ellison said his company had considered acquiring Novell Inc. as a way to
build on growing demand for open-source software that allows programmers
to quickly build Web applications.

This could also help to keep Linux as an important counter-balance to
Microsoft's Windows operating system that Oracle and other companies have
long relied on.

Novell, Red Hat and Oracle declined to comment on Ellison's comments.

But analyst Barnacle said buying Novell would present Oracle with a host of organizational challenges. Instead, he believes Ellison's comments were a shot across the bow to companies such as Red Hat that are creeping closer to Oracle's core database business.

Deal-making in the industry has heated up since Oracle purchased open-source database software maker Sleepycat and Red Hat stepped in to buy one-time Oracle target JBoss, whose products compete with those of Oracle.

Ellison said the Red Hat-JBoss deal could shake up existing alliances in the industry and potentially force his own company to become more aggressive in the Linux market.

"Now that Red Hat ... competes with us in middleware, we have to re-look at the relationship -- so does IBM," Ellison told the Financial Times. "I don't think Oracle and IBM want another Microsoft in Red Hat."

Opera Releases Public Beta of New Browser

Opera Software released the first public beta of Opera 9 on Thursday, giving users the go ahead to put its new Web browser through its paces.

Opera 9 includes a feature called "widgets," which are small Web applications such as newsfeeds or games that reside in a window on a user's desktop.

It also comes with the BitTorrent file-downloading software built in, meaning users don't have to start that software as a separate application.

The beta release follows a second technical preview of Opera 9 that was released about two months ago.

"There are no big feature changes in the beta version. The main difference is that the beta version is stable enough for people to use as their primary browser," said Tor Odland, a spokesman for Opera, in Oslo, Norway.

The software may still have some bugs in it, however, and Opera advised users to back up their files in case it causes any problems on their machine.

The software can be downloaded free of charge. It's available for all major operating systems including Windows and the Mac OS, Odland said.

The final version of Opera 9 will be released in the next few months, he said.

Microsoft's Internet Explorer dominates on the Web. Mozilla's Firefox browser has managed to eke out 10 percent of the market, according to figures released earlier this month by Web measurement firm Net Applications.

Microsoft Faces Tough Sell For Sender ID

Microsoft Corp. on Tuesday claimed rapid adoption of its Sender ID

framework for email authentication to fight spam, but at least one analyst firm said the software maker is waging an uphill battle in the industry.

On the eve of the second annual Email Authentication Summit in Chicago, Microsoft got the market machine humming for Sender ID, claiming its adoption has increased in March to 21 percent of Fortune 500 companies, compared with 7 percent the same month a year ago.

Sender ID uses Microsoft's proprietary Purported Responsible Address method for checking the headers with a message body to verify the legitimacy of the domain name from which an email is sent. Sender ID also supports the Sender Policy Framework Classic method, which looks only at envelope headers outside the message body; but the authentication system generally implies the PRA method.

The connection to Microsoft's proprietary technology has left email and Internet service providers reluctant to adopt Sender ID. As a result, Sender ID has had a "more limited pickup" in the industry then rival email-authentication technologies, such as DomainKeys Identified Mail, which is favored by Yahoo Inc., the largest email provider; and network supplier Cisco Systems Inc., analyst Arabella Hallawell of Gartner Inc. said

"We think that DKIM has the most potential," Hallawell said, adding, however, that DKIM is the most difficult to implement and is a ways from getting approval by the Internet Engineering Task Force.

As expected, one place Sender ID has seen an increase in use is on Microsoft's Hotmail, the Web mail service provided by the company's MSN portal. Since January, MSN has seen an increase in Sender ID-compliant email to nearly 32 percent from 20 percent, Microsoft says.

That's no surprise to Hallawell, since companies and marketers sending bulk email through MSN would find it easier to get Sender ID-compliant messages through Microsoft's spam filters.

"MSN hasn't make it mandatory for you to send email using Sender ID, but one would say it might weigh in your favor," Hallawell said.

Indeed, Microsoft says Sender ID email sent over MSN show an 80 percent reduction in getting snared by filters, compared with other non-spam email.

Despite that success rate, Yahoo remains uninterested in Sender ID.

"Yahoo is continuing to focus on DomainKeys and DKIM," a spokeswoman said. "We feel confident that there is widespread industry agreement that a cryptographic solution is the best long-term solution for the mail-authentication issue."

DomainKeys is an email authentication method that computes a digital signature, which is added to the message header. The receiving mail server obtains the sender's public key from the domain name system to validate the signature. Yahoo has used DomainKeys since 2004.

Microsoft declined to speculate on whether Sender ID would someday play a leading role in the email-authentication market or end up a supporting actor.

"I don't have a crystal ball," Craig Spiezle, director of the Technology Care and Safety Group at Microsoft, said.

One authentication method would certainly be easier for companies and marketers, but it's too early to say how the market will evolve, Hallawell said.

"That's obviously the bigger picture," she said. "One standard would be better, but that obviously hasn't been the case. Each provider is trying to mark off their own territory."

In addition to pushing Sender ID, Microsoft took advantage of the upcoming summit to unveil a new batch of MSN Postmaster Services, which provides tools and best practices that help email senders work within the portal's email filtering technologies.

The tools include a reporting program that lets organizations see the email messages from their networks that were sent to a junk mail folder. In addition, MSN provides reports on how email filters are processing messages, and guidelines for improving deliverability through Hotmail and Windows Live Mail.

UniqueAuction.com Courts 'Unusual' Bids

Add this to the list of ideas that never would have worked before the Internet: an auction site where you don't have to be the highest bidder to win.

The idea at UniqueAuction.com is to come up with the highest "unusual" bid. So someone who bids 48 cents on an item can beat someone who was willing to pay $15 - as long as no one else also bid exactly 48 cents, and multiple people bid $15.

The site makes money by charging $2 per bid, or $1 for "platinum" members who pay $100 a year. As a result, items go for ridiculously low prices. For example, the maximum price listed for an Xbox 360 game console on the site this week was $4.04.

That makes Ottawa-based UniqueAuction seem more like a raffle than an auction. But brothers Rocky and Arif Mirza, who launched the site in September, contend there's strategy involved because the bid history is viewable, allowing anyone to foil another person's bid by matching it so it is no longer unique.

However, waiting until the end doesn't necessarily increase the odds of success: If an auction ends with no unique bids, then the item goes to the first person who named the price that got the fewest bids.

Things are complicated further because platinum members are allowed to deploy "Mini-Bots" that automatically track all the numbers in play and let users respond with multiple bids at once.

Confused? Apparently enough people aren't. Unique Auction spokesman Scott Ledingham says the site has signed up 10,000 platinum members and raked $3 million in bid fees alone.

Massachusetts Court Rejects Microsoft Request

A Massachusetts court has rejected a Microsoft Corp. request to force software rival Novell Inc. to hand over European Union correspondence that Microsoft claims it needs to defend itself against antitrust charges in Europe.

According to a court order Monday, U.S. District Judge Mark L. Wolf said Microsoft had not shown that the EU proceedings were fundamentally unfair or would be if it did not have access to the Novell documents.

He said the European Commission had told the court it viewed Microsoft's subpoena as a "thinly veiled attempt" to circumvent EU procedures that aimed to strike a balance between a defendant's right to see antitrust papers and companies "who may have a well-founded fear of retaliation if they assist the Commission in such cases."

"It is now evident that granting Microsoft the discovery it requests from Novell would interfere with the foreign tribunal, not assist it," he wrote.

Wolf also criticized the software company for "erroneously, repeatedly" stating that the European Commission could not obtain the documents and make them available to Microsoft.

Microsoft's spokesman in Brussels, Tom Brookes, had no comment on the ruling.

On March 3, the company asked courts in California, Massachusetts and New York to compel Sun Microsystems Inc., IBM Corp., Oracle Corp. and Novell Inc. to hand over correspondence, saying U.S. judges could order U.S. citizens to provide evidence for use in foreign legal action.

California has turned down Microsoft's petition for Oracle and Sun. New York has yet to rule on IBM.

Microsoft said it needs to see these documents to understand how an independent expert came to write reports highly critical of the company's efforts to comply with the EU's 2004 antitrust order.

Microsoft's dispute with the European Commission took a turn for the worse in December when the EU antitrust authority charged that the software company had not obeyed an order to provide competitors with the information needed to make their software work with Microsoft servers.

The EU has threatened to fine Microsoft 2 million euros ($2.4 million) a day, backdated to Dec. 15.

Microsoft has said it believes the Commission colluded with its rivals and two outside experts ahead of the latest charges, alleging that regulators had "inappropriate contacts" with independent monitor Neil Barrett and rival companies.

It said that called into question the impartiality of a report Barrett wrote that said the technical documentation Microsoft had supplied needed a drastic overhaul to be workable.

The Commission has refused to comment on these allegations, beyond pointing out that Barrett was chosen from a list of candidates put forward by Microsoft.

The EU levied a record 497 euros ($613 million) fine against Microsoft in 2004. It also ordered the company to share code with rivals and offer a version of Windows without the Media Player software.

Microsoft is appealing the ruling, and the case will be heard next week by the European Court of First Instance, the EU's second-highest court.

Washington Settles Spyware Suit With Oregon Man

An Oregon man will pay nearly $84,000 in fines and consumer restitution for using e-mail to market bogus anti-spyware software called Spyware Cleaner, Washington state officials said in announcing a settlement.

State Attorney General Rob McKenna said the penalties are the first under an anti-spyware law the Legislature passed last year.

"We will not tolerate those who try to profit by preying on consumers' fears of spyware and other malware," McKenna said Tuesday in a statement.

The settlement with Zhijian Chen of Portland, Ore., follows a five-month investigation by the attorney general's consumer protection high-tech unit.

Officials say Chen made thousands of dollars in commissions by sending e-mail meant to mislead people into believing their computers were infected by a virus and that Spyware Cleaner sold by Secure Computer was the fix.

The lawsuit filed in January in U.S. District Court names Secure Computer LLC of White Plains, N.Y., along with company executives and other associates.

Chen will pay $16,000 in restitution to consumers who bought Spyware Cleaner as a result of receiving his message, the attorney general's office said. He will also pay $24,000 in civil penalties and nearly $44,000 in attorneys' fees and costs.

E-Mail Providers Look to New Spam-Fighting Techniques

E-mail providers are bolstering their defenses against the onslaught of spam and phishing attacks through the adoption of new e-mail-authentication technologies, according to information offered this week at a gathering of companies that focused on promoting safety and user trust in the e-mail ecosystem.

A report issued at the E-Mail Authentication Summit by the E-Mail Sender and Provider Coalition (ESPC) indicates that AOL, Microsoft, and Yahoo - companies that collectively handle more than half of the commercial e-mail in the U.S. - now are enforcing at least one of the current e-mail-authentication standards.

Those standards are based either on Internet Protocol (IP) technologies or cryptographic techniques, with the primary examples being Sender ID and DomainKeys.

Sender ID, backed primarily by Microsoft, verifies the domain name from which e-mail is sent by checking the IP address of the server that sent the message against a list of legitimate IP addresses for that domain. Yahoo is the primary backer of DomainKeys, a technology that attaches a digital ID to e-mail so that recipients can verify the source of an e-mail message.

The ESPC also noted that authentication is moving beyond the ISP level to the corporate mail server. In fact, late last year, ESPC reported that 70 percent of Fortune 100 companies have begun to authenticate their e-mail.

"Legitimate e-mail marketers have been quick to respond by adopting authentication over the last year to ensure their mail makes it to inboxes of leading ISPs," said Trevor Hughes, executive director of the ESPC, in a statement.

According to Microsoft, there has been a threefold increase in Sender ID adoption among Fortune 500 companies, from 7 percent in July 2005 to 21 percent in March 2006. And there are now some 3.3 million .com and .net domains worldwide sending Sender ID-compliant e-mail - to the tune of two billion e-mail messages each day.

There is progress being made on e-mail authentication, said Forrester Research analyst Paul Stamp, who noted the problem is that while most e-mail systems can support a multitude of measures to ascertain who is sending a message, it is still difficult to tie the credentials of a sender to the owner of a particular Internet domain.

"The domain owners must implement a process to check the identity of people applying for a particular domain," Stamp said. "This is a serious global problem because anyone can set up a domain to launch a phishing attack."

Stamp said that both the Sender ID and DomainKeys are effective against mass spam campaigns, but he also indicated that it is unlikely that a single standard will emerge as the preferred solution.

Attorney General Describes Online Kid Porn

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales used strikingly graphic language Thursday to focus attention on online child pornography and said Internet services companies are not doing enough to combat the problem.

"It is graphic, but if we do not talk candidly, then it is easy for people to turn away and worry about other matters," Gonzales said in a speech at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in Alexandria, Va.

Acknowledging that his descriptions could make people uncomfortable, Gonzales said he wanted to make sure people knew what was going on.

"I have seen pictures of older men forcing naked young girls to have anal sex. There are videos on the Internet of very young daughters forced to have intercourse and oral sex with their fathers. Viewing this was shocking and it makes my stomach turn," said Gonzales, who was accompanied by his wife, Rebecca.

It was their second visit to the center, created in 1984 as a

clearinghouse for information about missing and exploited children.

Ernie Allen, the center's president, said many Americans continue to hold mistaken impressions of the issue. "We hear all the time that this is really just adult porn, 20-year-olds in pigtails made to look like they're 15," Allen said. "This is about children being sexually victimized. They're young children and they're getting younger."

Without identifying companies, Gonzales said some investigations have been hampered by the failure of Internet service providers to retain certain records long enough to help authorities identify purveyors of child pornography. He did not propose a remedy Thursday.

But he did support tripling the criminal fines for companies that fail to report apparent violations of child pornography laws - to $150,000 for the first instance and $300,000 for subsequent failures.

The Justice Department has never written regulations establishing standards on how to report illegal activities or mandating how long records must be kept.

Kate Dean, director of the United States Internet Service Provider Association, said AOL, Earthlink, BellSouth, Verizon and other association members "currently have robust policies in place to ensure that law enforcement can obtain the information they need to prosecute child pornographers."

Dean said the companies would welcome a discussion with Gonzales on the issue.

The Internet companies last year made 34,939 reports to the missing children center, which forwards them to law enforcement authorities, said Michelle Collins, director of the center's exploited children unit.

Last week alone, there were 938 reports, Collins said.

"Several people a week are being arrested somewhere in the country because of information provided by an electronic service provider," she said.

The Justice Department was criticized recently by a victim of child pornography, who said investigators were acting too slowly on information he provided on 1,500 pedophiles. Justin Berry testified to Congress in early April that he starred in his own Web cam child pornography business for five years.

"I believed that the government would protect the children being abused. I believed they would act quickly," Berry, now 19, told the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "I was wrong."

Gonzales and other officials have declined to discuss Berry's case and resulting investigations, but they have pointed to a threefold increase in federal prosecutions of child pornography and abuse cases nationally over the past decade.

E-filing Conversion Progress Taxes IRS

The IRS is encountering resistance to its effort to encourage electronic

filing of federal taxes from millions of tech-savvy taxpayers who refuse to e-file because of the cost or security concerns.

About 55% of taxpayers are expected to e-file this year, up from 51% in 2005. But last year, 36 million taxpayers or their tax preparers - more than a quarter of individual filers - prepared tax returns on a computer, printed them out and mailed them to the IRS. A mailed-in return costs $2.49 to process vs. 78 cents for one that's e-filed, the IRS says.

A 1998 law directed the IRS to convert 80% of taxpayers to e-filing by 2007. Earlier this year, an independent oversight board recommended giving the IRS until 2011 to reach the target.

Reasons taxpayers won't e-file:

- Money. Last year, the IRS Free File program, a partnership between the IRS and private companies, allowed everyone to prepare and e-file federal returns for free. This year, the partnership limited free filing to taxpayers with adjusted gross income under $50,000.

Russ Saldi, 41, of Venice, Fla., used Free File in 2005 but is ineligible this year, so he'll mail his return. "I have no problem paying for the TurboTax software, but do not want to pay extra to file electronically," he said in an e-mail.

A recent survey of Internet users by Questus found that about a third don't e-file because of the cost.

- Fear. Mike Mahoney, 62, of Erie, Pa., downloads IRS forms, fills them out, then mails his return. He doesn't file electronically because he's not confident tax preparation companies provide adequate safeguards.

Mahoney e-files his state return because Pennsylvania residents can file directly to a state website for free. He says he'd e-file his federal returns if he could file directly to a secure IRS website.

Tax software companies and the IRS say the e-filing system has never had a security breach. TurboTax, largest U.S. tax software company, uses the same encryption technology as the Defense Department, says spokesman Scott Gulbransen.

IRS taxpayer advocate Nina Olson has argued that the IRS should offer a basic template on its Internet site that would allow taxpayers to prepare their taxes and file electronically for free. She told a Senate committee this month that she used tax software to prepare her return this year, then mailed it in. Although believing that e-filing is best for taxpayers and the IRS, "I resented the notion that I would have to pay separate fees to prepare my return and to file it."

Bert DuMars, IRS director of electronic tax administration, says the agency doesn't have the computer capacity to handle millions of direct-filed returns. "Some of our systems are 20, 30, 40 years old. We need to modernize them, and it's not cheap."

                    Internet Plays Bigger Role in Life Decisions

Nearly half of U.S. users of the Internet went online for help with major

life decisions such as finding a college for their child or looking for a
new place to live, according to a survey released on Wednesday.

The results show that the Internet is becoming increasingly important to
users in their everyday lives, according to the Pew Internet and American
Life Project, a non-profit group which conducted the survey.

Some 45 percent of Internet users, or an estimated 60 million Americans,
said the Internet helped them make big decisions or face a major moment in
their life during the previous two years, the survey found. That was up
from 40 percent of Internet users who answered the same survey questions
in 2002.

Specifically, the survey asked 2,201 adults last month if the Internet
played a crucial or important role in making at least one of eight major
life decisions.

An estimated 21 million Americans turned to the Internet when seeking more
training for a career, while 17 million used it to choose a school for a
family member or to help another person with a major illness, the Pew
Internet group said.

Some 16 million Americans used the Internet when buying a car or making a
major investment or financial decision, it said. An estimated 10 million
Americans used the Internet when looking for a new place to live; 8 million
when changing jobs; and 7 million when dealing with their own major illness
or health condition, the survey said.

"It seems likely that the convenience of broadband draws more users to the
Internet to deal with some decision," the Pew Internet group said. However,
better online content and more widely advertised web sites may also
contribute to the rising use of the Internet with major life decisions, it
said.

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